**AP English Literature and Composition**

**2014 - 2015**

**Course Introduction and Summer Work**

**I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound and stab us. If the book we're reading doesn't wake us up with a blow on the head, what are we reading it for? So that it will make us happy, as you write? Good Lord, we would be happy precisely if we had no books, and the kind of books that make us happy are the kind we could write ourselves if we had to. But we need the books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us. That is my belief.  **

**Course Description**

Franz Kafka, madman and author, penned the words above to his childhood friend at the ripe old age of 20. The goal of this course is to proverbially strike a blow upon your heads, but of the gentle Washington Latin sort. So, to you, I write, “Congratulations!” You are about to enter a most selective course, Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition, aka AP Lit. By the time you complete this course, you will be able to answer the question, “What does great literature tell us about the human condition?” and you will be able to speak and write intelligently about a variety of literary works with depth and insight. This course teaches beginning college-level writing through the fundamentals of literary theory and follows the curricular requirements described in the AP English Literature and Composition Course Description. We will talk each class meeting about some vital aspect of writing: invention, structure, and style (diction, syntax, figurative language, mechanics). Please do not worry if you feel your writing or reading skills are still developing. We can build those skills. Students who love literature, including poetry and drama, and want an intellectual challenge in the coming year will be well-placed in this course. At the end of the course, you will have studied in earnest some of the major literary works in the western canon, prepared for the rigors of the AP exam in May, 2015, and improved your writing, reading and analytical skills. If all goes well, your college or university may even view your success favorably enough to grant credit or advanced placements in their curricular stream.

This course will use a seminar format for discussion and a workshop method for the writing.The kinds of writings are varied, but include writing to understand, writing to explain, and writing to evaluate. The essence of scholarship is the combination of these three approaches to writing.

In general, the successful student will work hard, lean into the discomfort of constructive criticism and/or disagreement from both me and classmates, read carefully, and maintain an open, curious, intellectual mind.

In the course, we will read these novels and plays (in addition to nearly 50 individual poems):

Adler, *How to Read a Book* (excerpts only)

Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Faulkner, *Light in August*

Shakespeare*, Hamlet*

Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*

Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Williams, *Streetcar Named Desire*

We may add or take away titles, depending upon how successful we are as a group.

**Summer Work 2014**

We do read and meet as a group during the summer months, which is not only typical of AP courses all over the country, but the reading is already typical of English courses at Latin. We will read both of the titles under “Summer Work” above, in addition to some articles on reading. We will also meet at least 3 times (Monday, June 23, Monday, July 14, and Monday, August 4) during the summer to be sure you stay on track with the reading and to give you a sense of the course. Meetings are not mandatory, but, in the absence of unavoidable conflicts, you should plan to be present. We meet at 12:30.

Monday, June 23, 12:30 – 2:30

Maria Popova’s article on Virginia Woolf’s Essay “How Should One Read a Book”, annotated

Maria Popova’s article on Pierre Bayard’s book “How to Talk About Books You Haven’t Read”, annotated

IN CLASS:

* details of the AP exam
* discussion of articles
* introduction to poetry

Monday, July 14, 12:30 – 2:30

Adler, *How to Read a Book* pps 24- 44, fully annotated

Austen, Pride and Prejudice, pps 5 – 130 (Volume the First) + the Introduction

IN CLASS:

* use of “Unpacking the Novel”
* discussion of the historical context of *Pride and Prejudice*
* discussion of ideas in *How to Read a Book*

Monday, August 4, 12:20 – 2:30

Adler, *How to Read a Book*, pps pps 45 - 95

Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, pps. 133 – 236 (Volume the Second)

Monday, August 25 – Friday, August 29 First Week of School

Adler, How to Read a Book, pps 203-233 by Monday, August 25

Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, finish (Volume the Third) by Monday, August 25

Complete Unpacking the Novel for *Pride and Prejudice* during class this week

Essay in class on *Pride and Prejudice* on Thursday, August 28

Essay outside of class on salient point of reading due Friday, August 29

**General Communication**

Organization and communication are keys to success in this class. If you are not particularly strong in these areas, you will learn to be.You will need to get in the habit of checking your Latin email, using google docs and the google calendar, if you are not already in the habit of doing so. I send emails frequently throughout the year, which often require a response. Our first meeting will be Monday, June 23 at 12:30 – 2:30 in room 019. If you are unable to be there, please write me at [lseid@latinpcs.org](mailto:lseid@latinpcs.org). For this meeting, you should have read the attached Maria Popova articles, “Virginia Woolf on How to Read a Book” and “Pierre Bayard on How to Talk about Books You Haven’t Read”.

If you have a smart phone which can connect with the google calendar, I share the AP Lit calendar. You can also see it through your school email and the wiki (although we are likely going to teacher web pages next year). On the calendar, I post all assignments and all reading, as attachments. I will have the first semester mapped out by the start of school. There will be no excuse for not knowing what is going on or when things are due. You are essentially in a college-level class and it will be incumbent upon you to look at the calendar and know what you are supposed to be doing. You will receive few reminders and late work is not accepted. Welcome to college!